

SC

SONNING COMMON MAGAZINE



IN THIS ISSUE



FESTIVE FUN

A list of potential visits
this Christmas time
P5



VILLAGE REFERENDUM

We need your vote
P18-19



TRIBUTE TO JAMES WATKINS

A much loved villager,
whose father
founded the shop
P28-29

.....
**WISHING YOU
ALL A VERY HAPPY
CHRISTMAS**
.....

DEC/JAN 2022/23

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to welcome
Karen Drakeford-Lewis
to the team.**

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FROM THE EDITORIAL TEAM

But where are the clowns ... Send in the clowns ... Don't bother they're here ...

Government of the UK has felt a bit like this, let's hope it settles down. We cannot affect what is happening nationally, but we can influence what we do in our village. Volunteering is one way we can help others, but it also provides rewards for ourselves. This seems even more of a priority at this time of the year, especially now, with money constrained but time may be freely available.

Here are the list of possibilities; Parish Council, FISH, magazine, Christmas Lunch, treats boxes, magazine writers/contributors, Food bank, library, charity shop, Santa run, Youth Club and many more. See pages 4, 5, 7, 10, 17, 21 and 23. Please phone 0770 223 7956 or email editor.sonningcommonmagazine@gmail.com

In the last issue of the magazine there was an article about Jo Lawson who is the new manager of the pre-school. She sent this comment "I have been meaning to write and thank you for the article in the current issue, so many people have commented on it, we even had a local builder offer to help with the sand pit, which is amazing".

The magazine for December / January 2023 is full of interesting articles and has a wide range of Christmas events listed. I do hope you enjoy reading it.

The Trustees of the magazine send good wishes to you all for Christmas and New Year, 2023.

Diana

Diana Pearman Editor

MEET THE EDITORIAL TEAM



Diana Pearman



Christine Atkinson



Joan Grummant

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Happy Holly-days!

While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of information printed in this magazine, the editor and the publisher cannot accept any responsibility for the consequences of errors that occur.

**SC SONNING COMMON
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MECE NEWS



As we move towards Christmas of 2022, the dark nights and all that winter brings, it is very pleasing to report on two pleasing aspects of school life here at Maiden Erlegh Chiltern Edge.

Firstly, I have been incredibly buoyed by the sense of community we are receiving from the wider stakeholders in the school at the moment and this was borne out by our recent CESA Quiz Night. The quiz event runs annually but this year we saw 80 tickets sold and a bumper crowd in the school canteen on the evening of Friday 14th October. The event was used as a fund raiser for student-based projects and because of match funding from Johnson Matthey we have been able to turn that into almost £1500. This sense of community has been enhanced by the huge increase in the number of local students attending the school. Our

current Year 7 intake is a lovely group of young people with a much larger intake from Sonning Common and the surrounding villages than we have seen in the last few years. As you can see from the picture below, they are really enjoying their school experience! The attention we have seen recently from Year 5 and 6 parents has supported this increased level of interest in the school with over 300 families attending our annual Open Evening and school tours that took place across July, September and October. We will not know our final numbers for some months, but it is hoped that we will be full in Year 7 next year for the first time in many years.

With the community in mind, we are always looking for new members of our Governing Body. Whilst we are currently quorate it is always useful to have a slightly greater number of people involved. If you would like to get involved as community governor and help the school to progress even further please do not hesitate to contact Charlotte Cant, our Chair of Governors on c.cant@maidenrleghtrust.org

Just before half term the government published the provisional results for all secondary schools for the summer of 2022 GCSE examinations. I was delighted that our final results came out so positively with huge improvements



in both the attainment and progress of the students since the last set of full exam results in 2019. These results compare incredibly favourably with the other local schools and in addition, these results also show that the school works hard to deliver a broad curriculum with 54% of our students sitting the English Baccalaureate (English, maths, science, a humanity and a language included in the students' suite of options).

Lastly, it has been lovely to have finished a proper half term with little Covid interruption. Fixtures, trips, clubs, competitions and parents' events have all



taken place without any restrictions which has allowed us to deliver a positive and broad school experience for so many of our students. I had the pleasure of wading through rivers with Year 11 on a Geography field trip on the last day before half term but there have been many other events such as rugby teams, science clubs, history clubs and competitions that spark the academic curiosity and enthusiasm for life in school. Indeed, in the upcoming weekend we have a good number of Year 9 students taking part in the Amnesty International Youth Conference on Saturday; it is so great to see our students engaging and getting so involved in the world around them. ●

ANDY HARTLEY
Headteacher



CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES

Activities coming up near and far to get you into the Christmas spirit

Below are activities to get us into the Christmas spirit, from late night shopping to Christmas markets and Christmas light shows. They are written in order from closest to furthest away from Sonning Common.

Together for Christmas - Greys Court - 7 minutes, 3.3 miles

From 26 November

From the 26 November you can visit Greys Court in all its winter glory. The house will be filled with "warm lighting, handmade decorations, and the sounds of community carol singing." The rooms will also be filled "With the scent of real fir trees filling the air and rich decorations".

Enjoy winter walks around Greys although I would advise you wear wellies as in past years the woodland nearby has often been very muddy.

Finally, you could take a bite to eat in the Cow Shed Café. They will be serving "festive treats, such as mince pies, and you may be able to have some lunch inspired by traditional Christmas ingredients, such as turkey and cranberry sandwiches."

Henley's Christmas Fair/Late Night Shopping - Henley - 10 minutes, 5.4 miles

On Friday the 25 November

On the 25 of November Henley is hosting its annual Christmas Fair. This event will

start at 5pm and will be a fun evening for all the family. From food and crafts stalls to rides, whether you want to buy freshly made churros, burgers or donuts, shop for Christmas gifts or go on a Ferris Wheel. It really is for everyone. The Christmas Lights will be turned on at 7pm by the Mayor and the Winner of a local drawing competition for children.

Henley Christmas Fair at Stonor Park - 17 minutes, 8.5 miles

Thursday the 24 to 27 of November

"Over 120 UK-based independent and country-style retailers will be showcasing their artisan products all under one roof, with a heated indoor marquee and beautifully styled outdoor wooden chalets." according to the Stonor Park website.

Tickets are £12 when bought online after the 20 November.

Oxford Christmas Lights - Oxford Centre - 44 minutes, 23.7 miles

The lights show will be turned on, 18 November and will then stay on until the 20th.

This show is a "Glorious illuminations in hubs around Oxford's communities, activities created with and by residents, families and schools and events to enjoy together across the city will fill a weekend of fun from Friday 18 to Sunday 20 November."



London Lights - London - 22 minutes from Reading Station

Christmas at Kew Gardens, Oxford Street Christmas lights, South Bank Christmas lights, Carnaby Christmas lights, Covent Garden Christmas lights, Regent Street Christmas lights and St James's and Piccadilly's lights are all being turned on during November. Having been to London on many Christmases I must say London is an extraordinary place to wander round in the Christmas lights. South Bank's trees are lit up with strip LEDs of many colours and there are markets all around. Covent Garden is good every year with new and exciting foods to try, including churros covered in a multitude of toppings. ●

GABRIEL ANDLAUER-TURNER

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY

Regular events:

- Rhymetimes on the first and third Mondays of the month at 11am, for pre-schoolers
- Social mornings every Friday, from 10.30am - come for a coffee and a chat
- Gadget sessions - help with technology (Smartphones, tablets, laptops)

arranged with a volunteer at a time to suit you

- Storytimes - every Saturday morning at 10am, with Saturday 'specials' approximately once a month (crafts and cakes for sale). Aimed at under 8s

Christmas arrangements (correct at time

of writing): closed from Christmas Eve (12.30pm) until Wednesday 4 January (2pm)

For up-to-date information about any library events contact the library direct: sonningcommon.library@oxfordshire.gov.uk or 0118 972 2448 ●

ROSEMARY DUNSTAN

SONNING COMMON PRESCHOOL SCARECROW TRAIL



The Great Village Scarecrow Trail took place in October to raise money for Sonning Common Preschool. The preschool is a committee run charity so relies heavily on fundraising activities to provide learning and play equipment for the children. The Scarecrow Trail raised £240 through the generosity of everyone who hosted a Scarecrow and bought a map for the trail. We recently tidied up the preschool garden and money will be spent on plants and herbs for the children to investigate and encourage conversation around nature and cooking. We will also be investing in outdoor seating for the children made from recycled materials.

Scarecrows this year were impressive. From The Wizard of Oz and Harry Potter creations to a Chimney Sweep, Painter and Decorator and Humpty Dumpty. Keen eyed villagers may also

have spotted Superman as well as Wonderwoman. They were all shapes and sizes and offered a great display for everyone who took part in the trail. The Scarecrow hosts received a starter pack of 'ingredients' which were prepped and delivered by our industrious fundraising committee and we were extremely pleased with how many people hosted a Scarecrow or bought a map and followed the trail - over 70 maps were sold! One athletic young man completed the trail on foot and logged it at 8km - a great half term activity to make the most

of the autumn sunshine.

We are grateful for support from The Butcher's Arms who hosted a Scarecrow, as well as the lovely residents at Abbeycrest Nursing Home and maps were kindly sold by Heath & Watkins, Co-Op and Sonning Common Library. Prizes were sponsored by Bridges Estate Agents, The Hare & Hounds and The Butcher's Arms - A real community effort!

If anyone is interested in joining the Preschool committee, you don't have to have a child at the school, we are always looking for volunteers to help with fundraising and committee activities. You can contact the preschool at info@sonningcommonpreschool.co.uk or on 0118 972 4760 ●

Scarecrow Winners

1st Place Winner - Cliff & Pip Readings

2nd Place Winner - Albie & Maisie Rees

3rd Place Winner - Pete & Heather Wickham

Map Prize Draw winners each received a £5 Smyths gift card:

P Hopson, A Bird, E Densham, I Cottle, P Masters

NAOMI MOORE
Preschool Committee



CREEPIEST PUMPKINS AND GAMCARE

During September Sonning Common Youth Club were thrilled to welcome many new club members. We had a visit from GamCare who ran awesome, interactive activities aimed at educating our young people about gambling awareness. The young people made a fantastic poster, played games, asked important questions and had fun!

We also had a haunted Halloween party! We played dangling doughnuts, zombie stuck in the mud, wink murder and many more fun games! The young people worked together in groups to carve the creepiest pumpkin and there was a prize for the winners.

We are also extremely grateful to our new volunteers and are overjoyed to welcome them to our team. We are always looking for extra support and would welcome anyone who likes to have fun and are passionate about providing young people a safe space in which to develop their personal, social and educational development. Potential volunteers can contact the club on: youthleader@sonningcommonparishcouncil.gov.uk

Here is the link for GamCare : <https://www.gamcare.org.uk/>

JOLENE CHEROWBRIER



LIFESKILLS AND SPOOKY SPELLS

We have had another exciting term in our Beavers colony this autumn. The children have taken part in first aid training, a sleep over, fire building, fire safety, a mindfulness and yoga session and preparing for our Halloween fundraiser.

We would like to say a big thank you to all the families who came along to support us and to enjoy the Halloween trail through the woods this half term. It was a delight to see children, of all ages, enjoying the challenges and working together to make up some spooky spells and create some brilliant natural art on the woodland floor. Everybody who escaped the trail was rewarded with a chocolaty treat and helped raise some funds for the Beavers, cubs and scouts' group! It was a really fun afternoon and we are very glad so many families came along to enjoy it with us.

After many years of leading the village scout group we would like to give a huge

thank you to Graham Edwards for all his time, effort and dedication to the scouting world as he has now retired from leading the group. After a few weeks break the scout group restarted this week and had an exciting session on building fire lighters and making fire without matches! There is plenty of space in the new scout group for new members so if you would like to join us and try a session please come and visit us on a Tuesday evening (current timings 6-7:30pm), For more information please get in touch via socobeavers@hotmail.com

The remainder of the term promises more fun activities with a visit from Henley fire brigade, finishing the first aid badge and starting on our stargazing and space badge. The build up to Christmas is always an exciting time and we look forward to sharing it with the beavers, cubs and scouts in our section. ●

CHARLOTTE CANT
Beavers



TENNIS CLUB

Members asked to vote on colour of new courts

Following the resurfacing of the 2 tennis courts at Bishopswood this month, paid for with club funds and an SODC grant, the members have been asked to vote on the colours they would like them to be painted. This is due to be done in the spring. At present the leading options are 2 tone green or green and purple. VOTE now on website. Details on the club and memberships can be found at sonningcommontennisclub.org.



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Phil Sweetman

Parish news

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LIGHTING UP TIME

The Memorial Park Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) now has lighting to support winter use. Lighting will be permitted to operate up to 9.30pm. It will automatically shut off at that point, with one light allowing a further 5 minutes for users to leave the site via the tarmac footpaths.

Floodlights are operated via a token system, which can be purchased from the Parish Office details on the website.

www.sonningcommonvillagehalls.co.uk/bookings-and-calendar

Users will be provided with details of where the token meter is located and how to use it.

Currently, the northern third of the MUGA which is surfaced in orange polymeric all weather material, is lit by four floodlights

and is for paid and booked use ONLY.

To enable public use of the open area and accessible central third of the MUGA during the evenings, a light switch has been installed on the southern fencing, next to the opening of the central MUGA area. When the switch is pushed, 4 lights will automatically come on for one hour. These lights should provide sufficient illumination for both the areas for informal sport. One light will remain on for 5 minutes after the end of the lighting period, to allow users to leave the site safely via the tarmac paths.

In setting up Memorial Park, the deliberate decision was taken not to put a footpath across the grass plateau next to the MUGA, as this would have reduced the playing surface. Instead, access to the MUGA has been created via the tarmac paths around the site. We encourage all users to keep to

these paths especially during the wet months, to preserve the sports plateau and avoid a path being worn across it.

In due course, it will be possible for all areas of the MUGA to be booked, as the floodlighting has been installed to create 3 separately bookable zones. However, in the interest of promoting responsible use and encouraging activity and sport throughout the winter months, the decision has been taken to enable two thirds of the MUGA to be lit and accessible to the public, without cost to users. It is also felt that in the current economic climate, this is a positive way of helping local people stay fit and healthy.

Thank you for helping us keep this facility clean for everyone, putting litter in the bins provided, and helping make Memorial Park a safe and fun place to be. It is YOUR Park, so please look after it! ●

ROB JAMES

It is easy to take the community of a village for granted. Having worked abroad for much of the last 14 years you come to appreciate home in the UK and the freedoms and services that we are granted. Upon returning to the UK I moved to an area that was unfamiliar and was struck by the strong sense of community in Sonning Common. Behind the scenes of this charming village is a small group of people on the Parish Council who work hard to ensure that services are maintained and budget providing, improved. Quite fittingly, shortly after moving here I passed a flyer advertising for new Parish Councillors attached to the railings of what has now become (thanks to the Parish Council) the lovely Memorial Park. No money, time given for free? What's not to like with those terms and conditions I thought, so I joined up. I get a say in what happens in

my community and collectively we make a difference within our small neighbourhood. I guess much of what the Parish Council does goes unseen but sometimes you just have to stand up and be counted so that's what I have done. ●



2 more volunteers with Rob's enthusiasm are required on the Parish Council - Call 972 3616 NOW!

IMPORTANT DATES

FULL PARISH COUNCIL MEETINGS

Monday 19 December 2022

Monday 16 January 2023

Parish office open Mondays 9.00 to 12noon

Christmas Tree arrives 2 December

The saga of the village hall closure is coming to an end. It started with the floor being replaced due to damp underneath which had caused it to rise, resulting in a trip hazard. Upon investigation a serious leak was discovered, which had been long term and resulted in a need for the whole toilet area to dry out. The repairs were delayed due to insurance discussions and appointing builders/carpenters available to repair. Skirting boards and door frames needed to be dried out and a new concrete floor and soil pipe have been laid. These are complete. Remaining jobs are new flooring, toilets and cubicles to be installed. Hopefully soon. 😊 ●

Liza Foster

Foot Health Professional



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HENLEY AND DISTRICT STAMP CLUB

Christmas is nearly here, and we are rushing around getting ready for the madhouse. This is the last year you can use your old stamps to send the Christmas cards. From 31st January the only postal stamps that can be used have to have the horrible bar code fixed to the stamp, whatever you do please do not remove the digital code strip.

To learn more about stamps and postal history why not visit us at Bix one Wednesday evening. You can then meet people who find postal history and the story of stamps fascinating.

Wednesday 14 December - Members will display parts of their collection with a connection to the letters C and D. Approximate 9 pages telling a story.

Meetings are held the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at Bix Village Hall at 7.30 p.m.

Visitors and new members are welcome.

Further details can be obtained by phoning Brian on 01491 681739 or on our website: www.henleyphilatelic.org.uk

Non-barcode stamps will continue to be sold until stocks are exhausted and can be used until 31 January 2023. These stamps can be exchanged for the new barcoded version through Royal Mail's 'Swap Out' scheme.

'Swap Out' Application forms which are available from:-
www.royalmail.com/barcodedstamps

CHRISTMAS VILLAGE COFFEE MORNING

WEDNESDAY 7TH DECEMBER
10.30 am - 12 Noon

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CHILTERN EDGE HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY YOUR LOCAL GARDENING CLUB WINTER / SPRING 2023

- TUESDAY 10th January *ZOOM TALK 7:30 - 9:00PM
10 ways to a better Garden
A talk by Doug Stewart
- TUESDAY 14th February AFTERNOON TALK 2:30 - 4:30PM
Gertrude Jekyll
A Talk by Richard Biscrope
Peppard War Memorial Hall Gallowatree Road RG9 5JA
- TUESDAY 14TH March EVENING TALK 7:30 - 9:00PM
For the love of Roses
A Talk by Gillian Taylor
Peppard War Memorial Hall Gallowatree Road RG9 5JA

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MEET ANNE FAIRBROTHER MAKING MUSIC WHEREVER SHE GOES

by Joan Grummant



to make music accessible to all, while enabling participants to perform in a very supportive environment. All music is arranged, and tailor made for choirs. The musical directors deliver with an energy and sense of fun that make rehearsals a social and joyous occasion as well as promoting strong friendships and community strength.

When she left London, Anne wanted to meet the challenge of managing her own choir, as well as exploring new things, while arranging music to suit different abilities and voices. At present she is involved with three choirs as well as teaching singing at a local school. She works with Harmony, a choir based in Peppard, a Barbershop choir in Woodley and a Ladies' Choir. Her repertoire is very wide, ranging from traditional works to musical theatre. Her quest is to find music that can be stimulating and enjoyable, as well as challenging. All this, and arranging music keep her very busy, but her strong belief in the benefits of singing to good physical and mental health presents many challenges but also rewards. She likes nothing more than creating a musical environment where there is no pressure or stress.

Anne has a very strong interest in using choirs as community hubs and seeing the vast benefits of singing. The effect of music on the brain and the benefit to dementia sufferers is something she is very interested in developing. We hope she continues with her valuable work in the local area and shares her passion for music with us all. ●

Anne is a relative newcomer to Sonning Common having lived here for nearly two years. She loves the area and knows it well as she was brought up in Binfield Heath and always wanted to return to the area, after living and working in London for ten years. Her close family still live in Binfield Heath so she can pursue her musical career and keep close contact with her relatives. Anne has a real passion for music

and always knew it would play a huge part in her life: she never considered a career where music did not play a vital part.

Anne gained her degree at the University of Surrey and following that worked in North London with Popchoir- a vibrant organisation that is committed to bringing music to everyone through singing. All the singers are amateur, and the aim is

HARMONY MATTERS

On 26 August HARMONY 2022 was 1 year old and counting – that was a year that was!

From a standing start, and at the time of going to Press, we have now 81 members on roll with a regular attendance of over 50 singers every week in our new home, Peppard War Memorial Hall. Our age range is 36 to 97 years of age-truly integrating the ages. Singing is so good for body and soul as we can see from our enthusiasm and commitment to challenging and new ideas. We have even surprised ourselves by learning to play the kazoo – all under the unique direction and guidance of the greatest Musical Director on the

Planet, Ms Anne Fairbrother.

Our repertoire is extensive as our capability includes over 30 songs- some old, some new, but always entertaining and never boring. Our motto of, "have fun, enjoy and go home happy" contributes greatly to our feel-good factor throughout the ongoing Covid blues for the Country. We need little excuse to have a party as evidenced by our delayed Christmas Party in February 2022 and we closed our singing year in late July with another Party and then.... we started again at September 1st and we did it all again with singing and another Party.... followed of course by the Christmas Party.

A little bit of difference in this year, now that we are grown up, we shall perform a Concert for the local villages on 10 December at our home in Peppard. Watch out for advertising with details when HARMONY will give you some of our greatest hits and of course, Christmas Carols. In fact it could be singing and another Party.

An even better idea is for you to come and join us. Just ring Barry Wood on 01491 629982. There are no auditions and the only qualifications are that you enjoy singing and also.... like to Party and have fun. ●

Barry Wood

TOM FORT ELECTRIC

Why do people keep on telling me I should get an electric bike? Are they seeing something that I can't?

I admit that I am not quite as dynamic in the saddle as I used to be. I can't remember the last time I overtook another cyclist but there are plenty that speed past me.

And I concede that there are a couple of hills in this area – Devils Hill, coming from the Harpsden direction, and Gravel Hill in Emmer Green – which I used to gasp my way up but avoid these days. Not that I couldn't do it if I had to, you understand. It's just the sensation of my heart going like the main piston on the Ark Royal is not that pleasant.

But does that mean I need to go electric?

I was recently in Cumbria pedalling perfectly happily up a gentle incline when a woman in a car stopped and wound down her window. 'You need an electric bike,' she said with a cheery smile. I wanted to tell her to mind her business but being a polite and gentle soul, I merely thanked her for her contribution and carried on, inwardly seething.

In my view electric bikes are for wimps and show-offs. On a cycling trip in Cornwall my wife borrowed someone else's electric machine and took a sadistic pleasure in overtaking me on the hills – which are numerous in that part of the world – and then coming back down, turning, and going past

me again, chortling. I mean, how childish can you be?

I love the exercise I get cycling. I love the way cycling enables you to enjoy the countryside. I like the wind whistling in my ears on a good descent. I like the rhythm of it, and the quiet and the way my mind works when I am pedalling away. I am very fond of my bike.

And, no, I do not need power assistance. And if you see me going my own sweet way at my own sweet speed, please don't stop and tell me I should go electric. Not yet anyway. ●



WHAT MAKES A VILLAGE?

by Diana Pearman

A safe and healthy environment

It takes a village to raise a child” is an African proverb that means **an entire community of people must interact with children for those children to grow in a safe and healthy environment.**

An accidental village

**Between the woods in folded hands
My accidental village stands
Untidily, and with an air
Of wondering who left it there ...
A.A.Milne**

A growing village

Since 2017 when the magazine committee first asked this question at an evening meeting in the village hall, a lot has changed in Sonning Common. 200 new homes have been built and these new residents are hopefully, feeling welcome and liking the village.

It is welcoming?

Sonning Common is a large village in South Oxfordshire, a ‘construct’ of the 20th century. The comparatively recent development of Sonning Common means that it has a character very different from many other villages in South Oxfordshire, which have much longer histories. In 1874, a parish record from Kidmore End stated there were 5 cottages in what is now Wood Lane. The surrounding land was owned and farmed by many whose names are remembered on the roads/pubs. It is short on history but it does have Widmore Pond, which is said to have roman origins. Untypically it is on the edge of the village and the written records of its existence, date back to the 17th Century. A large area of ancient woodland - Old Copse Wood, extends north from the end of Woodlands Road. There is one 16th Century home, Reddish Manor. Fred Richens wrote about the village in the 1960s and he called it,

The village that never was ...

Its name is derived from the fact that it was originally the grazing, or common land attached to the parish of Sonning, which is on the Thames and to the south-east. Animals belonging to the people of Sonning were grazed up on the Common when the Thames flooded. As recently as 1900 Sonning Common consisted of no more than 40 houses on plots along Wood Lane, Woodlands Road and Baskerville Road. The settlement, defined by two dry valleys, the area of outstanding natural beauty and edged by the B481 and Kennylands Road, expanded slowly over the first half of the 20th Century so that by 1951 the population had grown to more than 1,400. At this point Sonning Common became a parish.

People like living here

Thereafter it expanded steadily. During the 1960s and 1970s several new estates were built and Sonning Common became one of the largest villages in South Oxfordshire. The people who bought these homes, many had young families and stayed because they liked it so much. The appearance from the 1960s onwards of some housing

developments of a more generic and less locally distinctive style has affected the overall impression without seriously compromising it. There is very little of striking beauty in Sonning Common but, equally, very little that is downright ugly!

People who smile and the community spirit

Sonning Common is blessed in many ways. It is peaceful and pleasant, but it is also full of life and activity. The busyness of the retail centres along Peppard Road and Wood Lane gives it real vibrancy. It is regarded by its residents as a great place to grow up in, to mature in and to grow old in.

When asked why people like living in Sonning Common, the two most identified reasons were “people who smile” and the “community spirit.” This spirit has been retained despite a significant growth in the population over the last 40 years and this is reflected and celebrated in the large number of thriving clubs.

What next?

The last few years have been very unsettling for so many of us. COVID and lockdown saw an amazing response from

people in the village who volunteered to help and support villagers who were, isolated, disabled and house bound.

Surrounded by open countryside

This ‘green’ surrounding is under threat. It is highly valued by the community and became top priority for residents during lockdown and the epidemic. The new homes have been mostly built on the edges of our village, which is the start of the expansion into the countryside.

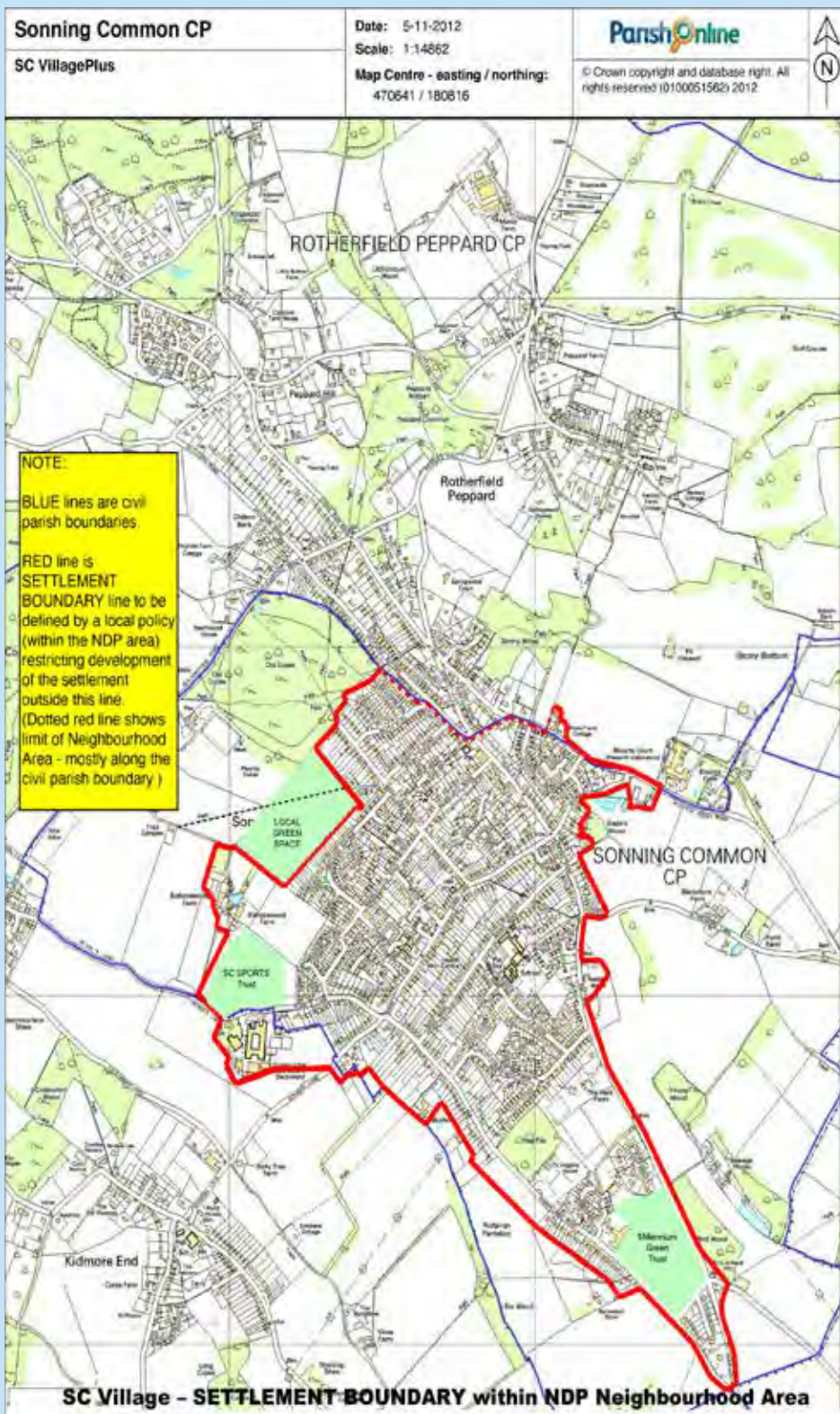
Some of you will know that the Neighbourhood Development Plan has been recently reviewed as the original, made in 2016, is now out of date. This article has emphasised how important it is to the village residents that it remains a separate entity and clearly apart from any urban environment.

The only way this can be achieved is via a settlement boundary and one of the policies in this new plan is to provide a ‘red line’ to preserve out separation. So, any land outside of this boundary could not be built on.

However the only way we can ensure this settlement boundary (see map) is agreed is dependent on YOU and your endorsement of the reviewed Neighbourhood Plan.

On 23 February 2023 there will be a referendum to validate the policies that have been drawn up in the document. These can be viewed on the SCPC website. It is important that the residents vote in support of this plan as it is the only way the settlement boundary can give us any protection away from urban sprawl and against speculative building applications.

It would ensure we remain a village. ●



STAY WELL, WARM & LOWER YOUR ENERGY BILLS THIS WINTER

Vaccinations, it isn't too late.

Get your winter vaccinations – even if you're fighting fit.

Respiratory viruses are more widespread in winter, so it's especially important to get your vaccinations.

Those aged 50 and over are eligible for a COVID-19 booster jab. It's not too late to have your first jabs.

You're entitled to a free flu jab from the doctor or pharmacist if:

- you're aged 50 or over
- you care for someone, such as a friend or family member
- you have a serious long-term health condition
- you live in the same house as someone who is immunocompromised.

Sonning Common Health Centre are giving both these jabs at the same clinic time.

Check if you're also eligible for the pneumococcal vaccine, which helps protect you from pneumonia, and the Shingles vaccine.

Keeping Well

Regularly washing your hands with soap and water is one of the best ways to stop germs spreading. It's a good idea to keep some antibacterial gel with you when you're out and about, too.

Catch coughs and sneezes in a tissue

Choose to wear a face covering in busy indoor spaces, like shops



Leave windows ajar to let fresh air circulate when meeting people indoors

Avoid close contact with people who are unwell.

It's a good idea to stock up on cold and sore throat remedies, too. Your pharmacist can give you advice on what might help if you're feeling under the weather.

The cold can increase the risk of a stroke or heart attack, as well as hypothermia. If you suspect yourself, or someone else, is experiencing any of these, call 999 (or 112 from a mobile) immediately.

For a stroke, think **FAST**:

- F** – is the face drooping on one side?
- A** – can the person raise both arms and keep them there?
- S** – is speech slurred?
- T** – time to call 999 if you spot any one of these signs.

Many people experience severe chest pain during a heart attack – but the symptoms can be different for different people.

Hypothermia is a medical emergency, just like a stroke or a heart attack.

Simple tips to keep warm and safe this winter

1. **Wrap up warm. Dress in layers and wear a hat, gloves and scarf. Socks and slippers inside.**
2. **Keep the cold out. ... Block out draughts this also includes keyholes, spaces between floorboards, letterboxes, and open fireplaces and draw the curtains at night.**
3. **Don't use alcohol to keep warm.**
4. **Check your heating. Have your boiler maintained; try turning your thermostat down a little.**

5. Maintain the temperature. Hot water bottles, electric blankets or Microwaveable Heating Pads also good for aches and pain.

6. Have warming food and drinks.

7. Stay active. Try not to sit still for more than an hour at a time. A quick walk down the street, dance around the kitchen or satisfying stretch in bed or a chair are all good pick-me-ups.

8. Check what support you can get.

Replace Incandescent Bulbs with LED Bulbs

Since lighting takes up around 5% of an average home's total energy bill, it's important to choose the right option to light your home. LED lights are not only energy-efficient but also eco-friendly and cost-effective.

When compared to traditional halogen bulbs, LED lights use up to 90% less energy and last much longer.

According to the Energy Saving Trust, if you replace all the bulbs in your home with LED lights, you could save £55 a year on your electricity bills!

The appliances in your home are one of the biggest contributors to your energy bills, from fridge-freezers to washing machines.

Turn Your Lights Off When You Leave a Room

Turn off radiators in spare rooms or in areas that are not used very often.

Turn Your Appliances Off Standby Mode

For washing machines and dishwashers, the best way to do this is by running full loads

Take a Shower rather than a Bath

Fill the kettle with the amount of water you need saves energy and water.



Scams

Beware of those offering a service, selling articles. Those who pretend to know you, just be cautious. All these can be attempted on the phone, email or at your door.

AGE UK offer many helpful guides including Your Mind Matters.

You can order any guides or factsheets by giving AGE UK Advice Line a ring for free on 0800 169 65 65 (8am-7pm, 365 days a year) There's plenty of useful information on their website, too. Visit www.ageuk.org.uk/winter to get started.

Help with energy costs The Government has announced some support to help people pay for energy and other essentials. Detailed information in the Help with heating costs factsheet.

Staff News

We are recruiting for a new receptionist after Emily has recently left after being offered an exciting opportunity to work

for a law firm in London which suits her law degree. She will be missed.

October Vaccination update

We have vaccinated 2323 patients and also completed vaccinating our housebound patients and care homes in our catchment area. ●

Sue Litchfield for SCHC

PPG WANTED

Sonning Common Health Centre Patient Participation Group is now recruiting new volunteers. Your local Sonning Common Health Centre Patient Participation Group (PPG) is seeking enthusiastic new members. No experience as a health worker is required – just a willingness to contribute a small amount of your

time supporting your health centre. As a member of the PPG, you will provide valuable feedback to the health centre's medical and management teams to help improve and maintain patient care. As well as quarterly meetings with the health centre team, the PPG holds health information events and supports the health centre with special projects.

Our PPG's aim is to represent all the patient population from students to new parents, to those still working, and the retired, so all are invited to apply.

Join the Sonning Common Health Centre PPG and play a valuable role representing the patient community.

To learn more about the Sonning Common Health Centre PPG

PLEASE EMAIL: schcpgg@gmail.com ●

SONNING COMMON HEALTH WALKS

Sonning Common Health Walks have recently bid farewell to Sue and David Birtwistle who have been regular walkers since the walks began in 1996. They have moved to Shrewsbury to be nearer their family.

Sue and David were active supporters of the Health Walks and any fun was associated with them. David was Chairman for a number of years, overseeing us through various administrative hoops. Over the years they organised some further afield Sunday walks that included sharing some local history/ knowledge/ interesting facts. Rumour has it there were even organised walking weekends away, to the Isle of Wight and the Austrian Alps. Apparently,

these were great fun, but as we are all aware: what goes on tour, stays on tour!

They will be much missed for their heckling humour and loyalty.

We wish them well and much happiness in this next phase of their lives.

Meanwhile the Health Walks continue without David and Sue. There are no walk timetables in paper form at the moment, so you will have to check the website for days/ starting places/distances: www.sonningcommonhealthwalks.co.uk/timetable. There will be no walks on the weeks commencing 19th and 26th December, and the starting places will change in the New Year.

If you want to speak to someone about any aspect of the Health Walks, phone Chris Brook on 0118 972 2609 ●



DEATH BY THE SEA

Death by the Sea is the sixth crime novel in **The Anglian Detective Agency Series** by **Vera Morris**, and was published by **Headline** on **27 October 2022**. Vera lives in **Caversham** and was once headteacher of **Chiltern Edge School**. She says it was wonderful to see many of her former colleagues at **Four Bears Books** in **Caversham**, helping her to celebrate the launch of the novel. All six books are available at **Four Bears Books**.

The latest novel is set in **Thorpeness**, a fantasy village, north of **Aldeburgh**. Built before the **First World War** by a railway magnet, for wealthy **Edwardians**, it's just the place for a murder or two!

Thorpeness, 1973. Wrongly exiled from **London**, Judge **Neville Hanmer** sought solace and a quiet life on the **Suffolk** coast. But then a face from the past unexpectedly resurfaces and he turns to **The Anglian Detective Agency** for help.

Laurel, **Frank** and the rest of the team are busier than ever trying to solve the mysterious theft of rare plants from **Yoxford**

'Dark, intense
and captivating'



Hall Gardens. But when Judge **Hanmer** doesn't show for their meeting, they find themselves embroiled in yet another case – one that will take them to darker places than they've ever been before.

With **Laurel** and **Frank's** relationship see-sawing out of control, can the team uncover the truth before it's too late? Or will a depraved killer succeed and separate **Laurel** and **Frank** forever? ●

Vera



THE TAIN OF MAGIC...

Local author Jeremy Smith has published the fourth, and penultimate, novel in his young adult fantasy fiction series about fledgling witch **Tilly Hart**.

The series begins with **A Rhyme of Dark Words**, in which we are introduced to **Tilly** and her friends as she discovers her magic and the ancient village of **Darkwurm**. Subsequent adventures and misadventures see her grappling with her emerging powers, sometimes overwhelming, sometimes seductive, and other times, simply fun. A personal tragedy informs **Tilly's** outlook throughout the series as she battles both real and metaphorical demons in parallel worlds.

Jeremy has created a hugely engaging world where fantasy and reality collide

- a trio of typical teenagers navigate their adolescence with a variety of witches, demons and monsters, and a few quirky adults from modern and bygone eras. Legends and prophecies foreshadow the pacy plot through the series - I am no longer a "young adult"; nevertheless I look forward to the conclusion of the series to see whether good or evil will triumph!

The first in the series was longlisted for the **Times/Chicken House** children's fiction competition in 2019.

Jeremy is a familiar face in **Sonning Common** but for those that don't know him, more can be found at www.jeremysmith-writer.com



IS THERE SOMETHING GOING ON AT THE LIBRARY?



After a relatively quiet couple of years, it's good to be able to look back at 2022 and remember some of the wonderful events that the **Friends of Sonning Common Library** have organised.

March saw a murder/mystery played out in the village hall thanks to a collaboration with **The Chiltern Players**. The wonderful **Rosemary House** wrote and directed, "An Ill Wind" which was played in the round and accompanied by a chilli supper. It really was a great evening, with some hilarious ad-libbing too!

Between **May** and **September** the library welcomed three guest authors to talk about their books. **Philip Gooden** gave advice on the seven golden rules of murder/mystery writing; **Carolyn Kirby** gave a very engaging presentation about the work of women pilots during **World War 2** which she had studied during the research for her book, "When We Fall"; and **Sue Clark** chatted about her time as a comedy writer for the **BBC** and her book, "Note to Boy". Look out for more author evenings at the library when they re-start in the spring.

During the year, the library hosted a scam awareness evening, and also started **Talking Magazine** sessions which

are held on the first Friday after the **Sonning Common Magazine** drops. A **MacMillan** coffee morning, which raised £400, was held in **October** following the unveiling of a picture bought to commemorate **Annabel Irwin** who worked in the library for over 10 years. Fond memories of **Annabel** who is missed by so many, and heartfelt thanks to all who donated.

Social mornings are now a regular event in the library every Friday from 10:30-12:30. Why not pop in for a drink and biscuit, and to see what's going on? There has been a calligraphy demonstration by **Rosemary Geake**, a display of lace pieces by **Joan Bree**, and of pebble art by **Bethan Toward**. The **Scrabble** board has also been dusted off and I've no shame in admitting I was very proud of my loo/po word intersection even though it didn't score many points!!

As you would expect, there have also been numerous events for children including visits from **ZooLab**, and **Lego Master Builders** who are due to return on 21st December (tickets in advance from the library). **Easter** saw eagle-eyed participants following the **I-Spy Trail** clues around the village, and the winner was **Noah Jones** from **Kidmore End**.



During the summer, bear-fever hit **Sonning Common** as hunters young and old followed the map to track down all 30 bears in the **Big Bear Hunt**. **Thomas Ashley's** entry was selected at random and he won a copy of, "A Book of Bears" by **Katie Viggers**.

August saw a special storytime when the author and the illustrator of **Frederick** the Fox visited to read their book and organise fun **Frederick** activities. If you have a young child why not come along to **Storytime** which takes place every **Saturday** at 10:00 and is often accompanied by a craft event and cake sale? Other mini-events for children also run throughout the year. Drop in to see what's going on. This year's **Sonning Common Primary School** winner of "Hunt The Character" was **Oliver Barron** and the non-**Sonning Common Primary School** winner was **Lucas Johnston**.

I hope you've been lucky enough to attend at least one of these events. The library is a free space for everybody and is about so much more than borrowing books so do call in sometime.

The **Friends of Sonning Common Library** are always looking for new ideas for events. If you have any suggestions please email friendsofsonningcommonlibrary@gmail.com or put a note in the **FOSCL** box at the library. ●

Alison Smith





ROTHERFIELD UNITED FC



Ladies Team

Rotherfield United Women's team is the newest addition to the club and have had a steady start to the 22/23 season with some close contests and two home wins. The team are comfortably mid-table competing in the development division of the Thames Valley County Women's league. Their games take place every Sunday at 2pm and progress can be seen via the FA fulltime site, or by following their Instagram account @rotherfieldqueenbees.

The team train at the Reading FC community dome every Wednesday from 6.30-8pm and anyone wanting to get back to football or try out are welcome to go along. For more information contact Lou Colam on 07739371397.

As well as having a competitive team, the inclusive club also have a Women's recreational team, who practice on a Monday afternoon from 5.30-6.30pm, for anyone wanting to try the sport, learn new skills, keep fit and make new friends.

WildCats

The Wildcats are the club's for younger girls from ages 4-8 and they have sessions on Saturday Mornings 10.15-11.15 with qualified coaches. The first two sessions are free, so if any of your daughters are keen to emulate the England European winning team then do take them down to try it out at Bishopswood Sports Ground.

Fundraising

Alan Noble, as well as being Treasurer and Membership Secretary for the club, is also coordinating fundraising events! Following a very successful quiz in September, the club are holding another one on Friday 2nd December, and a Santa Dash on the 11th. Please see the posters (on the Noticeboard?) for more information.

50th Anniversary – 2023 Vision

The club have been working with Oxfordshire FA and the Football Foundation over the past two years to look at how they can develop facilities to meet the growing demand in terms of numbers and spread of teams.

During that period the Rotherfield have seen their overall membership grow by 25% and the really exciting news is that this growth is not only in junior sides but also in Walking Footballers and Ladies teams. There are now 400 members across all the teams.

In order to get the required support, funding, and expertise there are a number

of hurdles the club need to get over in order to turn dreams into reality.

Andy Tidswell, chair of the club, told me "The really exciting news is that recently we have made some significant progress which has seen us get approval from the Football Foundation to be one of the projects that they will support, and we are one of only six clubs in the whole of Oxfordshire to achieve this. Just this past week the club have countersigned the 'Form of Joining' document and the Football Foundation have assigned us a Technical Project Manager, who will now work with the club's representatives to draw up detailed plans of what types of facility improvements the club require to support our growth and what planning and funding we would need to achieve those plans."

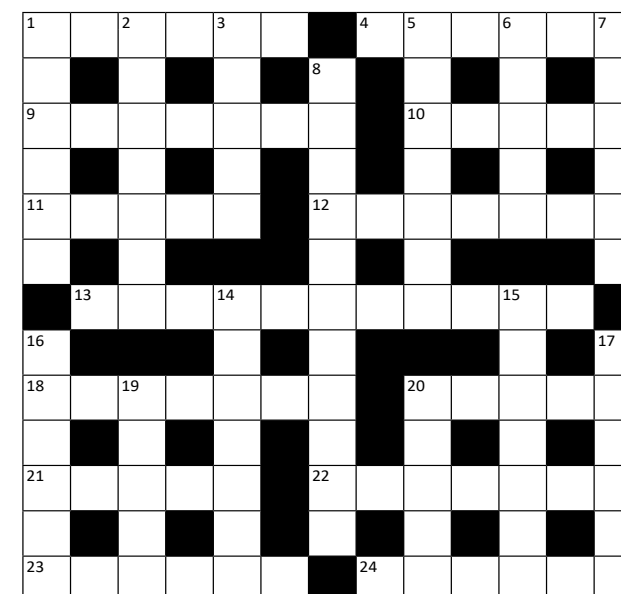
Whilst this is just the first step on the road it is a massive step forward as it means in the next few months the club will have the detail of the plans and can share those with our members and the local community. We all look forward to seeing those plans in future editions, and good luck with your dreams Rotherfield! ●



PUZZLE PAGE

By DAVID DUNSTAN

Cryptic crossword



ACROSS

- Bluest mixture is understated (6)
- Get rid of European predicament (6)
- Uphold badly after resistance for reindeer (7)
- Bishop enters my hospital with a Christmas gift (5)
- Goes mad around old Christmas bird (5)
- Turn mangle with energy to produce mixture (7)
- In tentative reorganisation, but not listening (11)
- Small time shortened for sick boy (4,3)
- Evergreen companion for Ivy (5)
- Sounds like Jewish mother is happy (5)
- Restore satin with preservation body in a jiffy (7)
- Go astray in reserved wine (6)
- European meets returning prize (6)

DOWN

- Southern prudes with pieces of 20 across perhaps (6)
- British new dog goes berserk in nightdress (7)
- Tell a story about students in French city (5)
- Arrived with a crowd in Arthur's court (7)
- 'Overall' found in a pronouncing dictionary (5)
- Repeats in the City with broken shoe (6)
- Cleaner disturbed madame with birch (11)
- Speak in familiar terms and utter 'Yo!' vaguely (7)
- Sonning Common perhaps appears in the evil lager lout's path (7)
- A good person with assorted maps for sending Christmas cards (7)
- The organisation sets my confusion (6)
- Runs about with European tender (5)
- Multitudes of party organisers (5)

Sudoku

Grading: medium

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | 2 | 4 | | | | | 6 |
| 4 | 7 | | 8 | | | | | |
| 9 | | | | | | 4 | 8 | |
| 3 | | | 5 | | 4 | | 6 | |
| 2 | | 6 | | 8 | | 7 | | 5 |
| | 5 | | 9 | | 6 | | | 3 |
| | 1 | 8 | | | | | | 4 |
| | | | | | 8 | | 5 | 7 |
| 7 | | | | | 2 | 3 | | |

Cryptogram

The following quotation has been encoded using a simple letter substitution. What does it say?

ACHETIRST ET ICO TOSTVM NVH FEMKDEML
ICO NEHO VN CVTGEISDEIP.
— YSTCEMLIVM EHWML

Quiz: Christmas

- Who was the first English king to have turkey for Christmas?
- In which country did Stollen originate?
- Christmas Day became a bank holiday in the UK in which year – 1834, 1884 or 1934?
- The first televised Queen's speech was broadcast in which year?
- Who played George Bailey in the 1946 film 'It's a Wonderful Life'?
- Richard Attenborough played Kris Kringle in which 1994 Christmas film?
- Who wrote 'A Christmas Carol'?
- 'Tidings of comfort and joy' are brought with which carol?
- On the ninth day of Christmas, what did my true love send to me?
- Which popular Christmas flower is thought of as a symbol of the Star of Bethlehem?

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ENERGY PRE- PAYMENT METERS

citizens
advice



Under pressure to use energy pre-payment meter? Citizens Advice can help

In the concluding months of 2022, Citizens Advice is expecting to see more cases of a disturbing trend: low-income families with energy supply debts being pressured or even coerced into using pre-payment meters for their gas and electricity. Energy supplied by pre-payment meters costs more than energy paid by direct debit or on-

demand, and this comes at a time when drastically increased price tariffs this autumn will probably see most people's fuel bills double.

Energy suppliers are legally obliged to negotiate repayment plans with customers who are falling behind on their bills, but many suppliers are ignoring this requirement and proceeding with installing pre-payment meters - or, for customers with smart meters, remotely switching them to prepayment.

If you are one of the many people who are confronting this problem, or are generally floundering amidst your finances, worried about the future, or want to discuss your problems in confidence, get in touch with Citizens Advice on Adviceline **0808 278 7907**. You can also telephone the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on **0808 223 1133** or the Citizens Advice Debt Helpline on **0800 240 4420**. Our website has lots of helpful information: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

CHRISTMAS COLLECTION FOR CIRDIC

Can you help? The churches of Christ the King, Sonning Common, and St John the Baptist, Kidmore End, are supporting the work of CIRDIC (Churches in Reading Drop-in Centre) in the run-up to Christmas.

Established in 1990, CIRDIC is a safe and welcoming drop-in centre for homeless people living in the local community. The Centre offers a range of support services including hot meals, clean clothes and toiletries, shower facilities and access to health care.

The Centre relies on cash donations and also welcomes any of the following: men's clothing, socks and underwear (medium); women's clothing, socks and underwear (size 8, 10, 12); deodorant; shower gel; toothbrushes and toothpaste; razors and shaving cream; towels; tinned meats and fish; tinned fruit and vegetables; tinned rice pudding and custard; peanut butter; chocolate spread; Marmite; brown sauce; ketchup; mustard; salad cream; instant coffee; biscuits; sugar; marmalade. No pasta or baked beans please!

Donations can be left in the marked boxes in the porch at both churches, or please contact Linda Scottern (lwmartin_74@hotmail.com) or Peter Blake (kesc.pccsec@gmail.com).

THAMES VALLEY POLICE

Statistics for last 6 months



2,500 officers involved in committal service at Windsor.

Policed high profile events, Royal Ascot, Henley Regatta and Reading Festival.

Thames Valley area includes Berkshire Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire - half a million contacts.

Launched strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, rape charges increased by 8%, stalking and harassment by 45%

They found 3,319 missing people 1,567 of whom were children.

Attended 800 sudden deaths and made reports to coroners.

2,400 drug dealing and possession crimes were recorded, and 445 arrests were made for knife crime.

A police Drugs Taskforce has been set up.

Another new specialist team has been set up to tackle Rural crime.

TV police has a work force of 8,000 staff officers and volunteers.

More than 1.600 applications to join the police were received. 17% were Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic and 38% were women. They wish to recruit 702 officers in 2022-2023.

The Race Action Plan to increase the trust and confidence of the diverse

communities and to address any disparity in the service.

Chief Constable John Campbell said "These wide-ranging statistics provide a glimpse of the complexity of modern policing and the variety of the work undertaken by Thames Valley Police every day."

In light of all these numbers, the most important thing to remember is that each of these statistics has a story behind them; a family reunited with a loved one; an event that was able to take place safely and without disruption; or a person who has called out in their time of need".

JAMES WATKINS



For anyone who has lived in Sonning Common a long time, you will have known my dad-James Watkins.

Dad was born and bred in Sonning Common attending Sonning Common Primary School and latterly Chiltern Edge. When Dad left school, he went straight into the family business-Heath and Watkins, opened just before the second World War by my Grandad, Ted and his partner, Jack Heath. Dad predominantly worked in the workshop where he used to mend irons, hairdryers, and other electrical appliances. Unbeknown to him, most of these appliances contained asbestos and people were not aware of the associated dangers back then. Dad worked in a confined space without a mask, and it wasn't until 40+ years later that the result of these dangers became apparent.

My Grandad retired and handed the shop down to my Dad in 1990. But my Dad loved being outside-specifically in

the garden, so soon after that he decided to sell the family business and create his own landscape gardening business. I'm sure some of you reading this article will have used 'Oak Grove Garden Services' and would agree what a hardworking person my Dad was and his attention to detail second to none. Some might say a perfectionist!

My mum, Jean worked in the hairdressers in the village and with Dad working in the shop, they soon became an item, eventually marrying in 1976 on the hottest day of the year. Sport and activity were my Dad's life! He played



football for Kidmore End- and was quite a feisty player if rumours are to be believed! He then progressed into distance running. He ran numerous half marathons and dozens of 10k's and marathons. One of his biggest achievements in life was becoming a sub-three hour marathon runner. When he was 70, his aim was to be 'the fittest man in Sonning Common' and I believe he was pretty close to achieving that! When the hips and knees became a little creakier, he then took up walking and I mean 'proper' walking! He walked in the Himalayas; completed the Three Peaks Challenge as well as the Pennine Way and South-West Coastal Path. There was always a map open, and a new adventure planned.

In more recent years, he started to play Walking Football at Rotherfield United...although I would question his interpretation of 'walking!' He and Mum also bought a motorhome and started to explore more of the UK. He loved the freedom of the open road and going on new adventures.

In December last year, Dad started to experience pain in his chest. We initially thought it was an injury he picked up at Walking Football, but his symptoms worsened. In February he was diagnosed with Mesothelioma- an aggressive form of cancer in the lining of the lungs caused by historic exposure to asbestos. We were told he probably had 18 months-2 years and despite his fitness levels and mental resilience, he only lasted 8 months. With the support of the incredible Sue Ryder team; District nurses and Sonning Common Health Centre (namely Dr Drury and Dr Emerson) Mum and I were able to care for him at home which is what we all wanted. Heartbreakingly on the 18 October he lost his fight, with mum and I holding his hands telling him how brave he was.

My Dad was a loyal husband; courageous; dedicated; genuine; witty and quite honestly the best Dad I could have asked for. The thought of life without him now seems almost impossible. But I do want something good to come from his death. I want to raise awareness of the horrific illness which took him far too soon.

More than 2,700 people are diagnosed with Mesothelioma in the UK every year, mainly men aged between 60-80. These people tend to be plumbers, builders, electricians, or those who have worked in the ship or car building trades where asbestos is readily used. It can take decades for the symptoms



to develop but when they do, they are typically:

- Chest pain
- Breathlessness
- A persistent cough
- Severe fatigue
- Loss of appetite

Dad's cancer had unfortunately progressed too far for him to have any treatment, but I hope that by talking about Mesothelioma, we can make other families aware of the signs and symptoms to look out for, so they do not have to experience the pain and loss we are currently going through.

My Dad was my hero and will forever be my inspiration in everything I do.

Life will never be the same again.

www.mesothelioma.uk.com

If you would like to make a donation in Dad's memory, we are asking for support for Sue Ryder Palliative Care-specifically the South Oxfordshire hub.

These ladies are angels in the human form and ensured Dad's last days were full of joy, compassion and dignity. ●

Amanda Watkins-Cooke



'Our final holiday took place in the Gower in mid-August. It seems very poignant that this was the venue of Dad's last holiday as this was somewhere he visited as a child and we, as a family, enjoyed many happy times there. Our reason for visiting was for Dad to walk over Rhossili Down one last time-the beautiful backdrop to the famous Rhossili beach. He was beginning to feel quite ill by this stage and he spent three out of the four days we were there in bed but he was absolutely determined to complete this 8 mile walk. Through sheer grit and determination, on a very hot day he managed it, and he was positively 'buzzing' afterwards!

This achievement completely summed up my Dad's character; Driven, strong-minded, resilient, courageous and always willing to push himself beyond what was expected. I was so proud of him.'



Church news

ST MICHAEL'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

During the summer we were delighted to welcome our Archbishop, Bernard Longley. His visit, like so many other plans, had been delayed since 2020. During his time with us he Confirmed some of our older children.

We concluded our parish's 75th anniversary at the end of September, around the feast of St Michael and the Archangels. During the weekend a visiting priest, Fr John Udrys, led a retreat and used the example of St Thérèse of Lisieux to help us with our own walk with God. The weekend and anniversary concluded with a parish bring-a-dish lunch in the hall. This was very popular. Fortunately, the weather was glorious enabling us to spill outside into the garden.

We are delighted to continue supporting the Foodbank coordinated by Springwater Church. It is an example of what can be achieved when the Christian communities work together.

At the time of writing the temperature is still around 20 degrees but our thoughts are turning to Advent, Christmas and the New Year. Advent is the season when we reflect on the year that has passed and prepare for Christmas and the New Year. To assist with this:

Monday 28 November 5 & 12 December at 7pm-8pm, the church will be open for quiet prayer and reflection before the Blessed Sacrament.

Monday 19 December at 7pm, a penitential service with the opportunity for the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Christmas Masses:

Saturday 24 December at 5.00 (for families with young children 7.30 Carols followed at 8.00 by 'Midnight' Mass

Sunday 25 December 9.00 and 10.30

Monday 26 December 10.00

We look forward to welcoming new friends and old over the Christmas season now Covid restrictions are lifted.

If want to know what is going on check the weekly newsletter on our website: www.saintmichaelsonningcommon.org.uk

SPRINGWATER

We are so grateful to God for his consistency in a tumultuous and changing world. As a church we choose to follow Him as he leads us through the jungle of politics, climate change, rising prices, wars and famines. In all the confusion we can't see a path through this jungle, but we somehow need to have faith that he will lead us through, human beings cannot sort out the horrors and the mess in their own strength.

The Ark, our parent and toddler group, is still very popular as is the Spring Cafe and our bread baking workshops - 'Compassionate Loaf'. The foodbank continues to grow and we are regularly amazed by the generosity of both donors and volunteers, who give so much to sustain this much needed resource.

Our Sunday gatherings continue to bring encouragement, and teaching to many, a great mixture of people of all ages. Aspire, the women's group thrives and the men of The Steering Wheel Fellowship still meet on a monthly basis,

On behalf of Springwater I would like to wish you all a very happy Christmas and a New Year better than you can ever have imagined. Do please check our website or phone the office if you would like to check on upcoming events and our Christmas Carol service.

FREDA (KNOWN AS RUSS) MORGAN

Mrs Freda Morgan died recently at the age of 95. "Russ", as she was known to friends and colleagues, was a popular teacher at Sonning Common Primary School for two decades from the 60s to the 80s. She and her family lived in Emmer Green.



After the family had settled she taught at Sonning Common as a part-time teacher - the same year as a young Stuart Pitson who went on to be deputy and headteacher in later years. Initially she worked part-time sharing a class with Mrs Kitty Jeffries, later teaching older Juniors as a full-time teacher.

Mrs Morgan became a well-liked and respected teacher who had a wide range of interests including music and history, which she shared enthusiastically with her pupils. She was always dressed immaculately and carried herself with dignity. She had a "presence" which commanded respect and she was fair, but firm with pupils. She could run whole-school assemblies in a full hall when staff said that you could hear a pin drop!

She was also a conscientious and caring teacher with an impish sense of humour which was evident in her interactions with pupils and staff. Her classrooms were organised and well-displayed. She had beautiful handwriting and instilled high

standards in pupils' work. Russ would always be involved in all parts of school life, taking many children away on residential visits - Bridport in Dorset was a favourite of hers. She loved the end of year staff versus pupils' events and always took part - umpiring or refereeing in later years.

Her career saw many changes in the school not least the drop in pupil numbers from nearly 700 to less than 300 as the "Baby Boom" years concluded. In Russ's final years of teaching, the management and government of schools changed radically and the cumbersome National Curriculum was introduced. In addition, technology and the advent of classroom computers was a challenge to all schools and teachers.

In retirement Russ and Norman reaffirmed their commitment to their church community at Dunsden Church and continued to enjoy their trips abroad. Norman died some ten years ago and Russ continued to live in the family home in Emmer Green until the onset of dementia when she went into care at St Luke's Care Home in Caversham and it was there that she passed peacefully away on 10 October.

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST AND CHRIST THE KING

Advent marks the beginning of the Church year, four Sundays before Christmas, a time of waiting and preparation. As we anticipate the joy of Christmas, we can take time to reflect on the year that has passed.

It has been wonderful to be back to regular 'in person' worship in our churches this year and to celebrate those festivals that make up the pattern of the church year. In October, a harvest thanksgiving service was held at Christ the King and at St John's a joyful service of harvest carols, with Kidmore End School choir. Both churches were decorated beautifully with seasonal flowers, fruit and vegetables.

Also in October, the choir of St John's, with singers from Christ the King, held a fund-raising concert, featuring



an eclectic mix of musical offerings and followed by some excellent refreshments.

Many people from our local villages gathered at the Kidmore End war memorial on 13 November to unite in commemorating Remembrance Sunday.

Looking ahead, the church will be holding a Christmas Fair on Saturday, 3 December at Christ the King from 12-3pm. Do come along!

After two years of 'alternative' Christingle services, we are hopeful that Christingle 2022 will return in its usual format. This is a wonderful family service which takes place at Christ the King on Christmas Eve at 4.30pm. There will be carols by candlelight and a Christingle to take home, as well as a retiring collection for the Children's Society, who care for vulnerable children and teenagers.

You would be most welcome at any church services over Christmas:

Tuesday 20 December: Service of lessons and carols, St John's, 7.30

Christmas Eve: Christingle service for all the family, Christ the King, 4.30

Christmas Eve: Midnight mass, St John's, 11.00pm

Christmas Day: Family Eucharist, Christ the King, 9.30

Christmas Day: Family Sung Eucharist, St John's, 11.00

Karen Broadbent

CHILTERN EVANGELICAL

Christmas Activities

10 December Adventurers Youth Group Christmas Party 4-13 year olds, 6 - 7:30
SC Village Hall

18 December Christmas Carol Service 6:00 - 7:00 check web site for venue, refreshments afterwards

25 December Christmas Day Service 10:30 - 11:30 Emmer Green Youth and Community Centre

Please see website for full details (www.cecuk.church)

Christmas is full of paradoxes!

What do I mean by that? Before I explain, let's remember what a paradox is. OED states, 'a person, thing or situation that has two opposite features and therefore seems strange'.

A famous preacher recently said, "There is Santa Claus, a mythical, supernaturally empowered, large elf who slides down chimneys, and whose entire verbal contribution to the world is "ho-ho-ho." I'm not sure how he's managed to have such a lasting impact! And juxtaposed to him is none other than the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is supernatural, the Godman whose words are profound and deep and eternal and life-giving."

There is the still quiet of the manger, contrasted with our fast-paced hive of activity and rushing around everywhere. Light poured from a single star pointing to the promised Saviour who had come. Our Christmas's are filled with vast lights and decorations that fill cities!

The first Christmas was a poor affair; whereas we display our wealth through millions spent on advertising, presents and all manner of temporal distractions.

Amid living in our paradoxes, take a moment to consider with whom it all started. The preacher above concluded, "Santa Claus gives you what you want because you deserve it; Jesus Christ gives you what you need even though you don't deserve it."

Take time to stop, listen and consider Him. ●

Ben Densham

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SOCIAL MEDIA, A FORCE FOR GOOD OR A FORCE OF BAD FROM A TEENAGER'S PERSPECTIVE

In recent years I have found myself
using social media more and more
whether to talk to friends, relax,
procrastinate or see what's going on in
the world.

As someone who currently uses Bereal,
Instagram, Snapchat, Discord, YouTube
and WhatsApp I think I have quite a
good perspective to talk about what
it's like.

I have also found that social media is
discussed more and more in and out of
class as society takes more notice of
mental health and what affects it. So I
decided to write about a "teenager's
view of social media" this month.

Social media is undoubtedly a
phenomenon which will affect our lives
in the future both directly and indirectly
and both positively and negatively. Now
personally I see social media as a force
for good although I can see why others
would disagree.

Social media helps me to keep in contact
with friends and people with whom I
would later become friends wherever
I am at any time. Whether it is 7am or
9pm I can, if I so choose, use social
media to message someone. This is
rather useful. For example, I have mock
exams in two weeks and as I write this
article, I am also communicating with
my Chemistry Mentor, a Year 12 at my
school, on Snapchat about Le Chatelier's
Principle.

Now I understand that social media
messaging platforms can be used for
cyberbullying, but I must note that unlike
in "real" life on social media people can
be "Muted", "Blocked" or "Archived"



which I think can help to limit the reach
of negative people on social media.

I also find that social media, specifically
YouTube has really helped me with my
study. I know that might sound counter
intuitive but what a lot of people do
not realise is that YouTube is a beehive
of information videos, you can find
tutorials on literally anything from pond
management in permaculture to nuclear
physics.

On the other hand, though, social media
can lead to the fear of missing out as you
can see, often live, other people meeting
up for instance. However, I feel deleting
social media would just push back the
issue. If all my friends met up after
school and I couldn't make it even if I
didn't see it on social media, I would hear
about it at school the next day.

People often bring up the problem
of seeing things they didn't want to.
However, I personally haven't found this
to be an issue. Social Media algorithms
are designed to show you things you
would be interested in, essentially
suggesting similar videos to those you

have already watched. It is very rare to
be shown something you have never
searched for.

Body image is also undoubtedly a
problem when it is negative, and I would
agree that social media may have made
it worse. However again I would question
to what extent? For those of you who
went to Secondary School before
Instagram was launched (that was
2010) I would ask did Body image affect
people when you went to school? I can
only assume some people still worried
about their appearance and were at
points, in their life, insecure.

Although social media does have issues, I
feel it would be naive to believe the issues
would disappear if social media didn't
exist. We need to look at how to mitigate
negatives and keep the positives.

We shouldn't become Luddites and
reject modern technology.

In my opinion, social media is a useful
innovative technology which will be a
force for good. ●

Gabriel Andlauer-Turner

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